

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA
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Kathleen Walkup

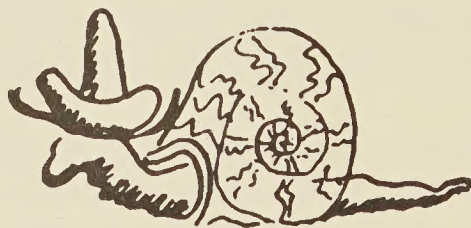
LAST WEEK I VISITED FRIENDS whom I hadn't seen for many years. They were mildly complaining about the small size of their kitchen — obviously the kitchen of dedicated cooks — but one solution that had not occurred to them was to clear out their impressive collection of cookbooks, which took up at least half the wall space and spilled out onto the floor. And why would it? Books and food create a synergy that is undeniable. I suppose there are booklovers without a library of cookbooks, but that is difficult to contemplate.

In this issue of the *Quarterly* we celebrate cookbooks, their authors and the foods they memorialize. Guest editors (and antiquarian booksellers) Lizzy Young and Kate Mitas have concocted a tasty mixture of articles celebrating everything from the taco (our own Randy Tarpey-Schwed) to the oyster and the wolf (the incomparable M.F.K. Fisher, whose works are remembered here by cookbook author Cynthia Graubart). UC Berkeley professor Ellen Langer's tribute to the cookbook of the legendary (and now sadly gone) Manka's Czech restaurant in Inverness takes me back to the days of dining in that warm, enveloping space in the midst of the coastal woods, the air redolent of slow-cooked meats and rich, filling sauces. A Mark Twain feast (offered up by menu collector Henry Voigt) and the ongoing bout between red sauces (Russian and Thousand Island in this case) by bookseller and condiment aficionado Tom Nealon round out our menu.

We also include more book recommendations. (Who doesn't love a good bibliomystery? Or for that matter, Venice?) When you're ready to take a break from food but not from books, these reviews will keep you reading.

» » »

ONE QUICK MEA CULPA from Michael Gorman, one of the reviewers from our Fall issue, who apologizes for mixing Kevin Starr (whom he meant to cite) with Kenneth Starr. According to Gorman, even Ringo Starr would have been a better slip.

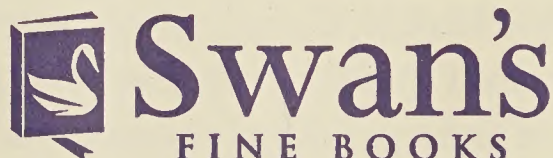


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Taco Californica

Randall Tarpey-Schwed

FOOD LOVERS OWE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE to our New World brothers and sisters who gave us such indispensable agricultural products as tomatoes, potatoes, chocolate, and vanilla. Ironically, many of those New World products were so thoroughly adopted by Europeans that they are no longer associated with the New World. Try to imagine southern Italian cuisine without the tomato; or Swiss or Belgian chocolate without the cocoa bean; or French pastry without vanilla. But the two foods that seem to have retained their “New-World-ness” are maize and chiles, which are the essential ingredients for a taco.

In my early childhood, tacos defined Mexican cuisine. My mother was gastronomically adventurous but constrained by both her own experience and by our local supermarket’s ingredients. For me, tacos meant pre-formed shells filled with ground beef that had been cooked up with McCormick’s Taco Seasoning Mix. As I remember it, McCormick’s blend was excessively flavored with cumin, which is actually a Middle-Eastern spice that was later adopted by Mexicans; and with paprika, a Hungarian spice derived from New World chiles that nobody thinks of as a Mexican spice. It was the paprika that gave the juice from my mother’s slightly greasy taco filling its peculiar orange color. Our tacos were always topped with chopped iceberg lettuce and diced tomatoes. Sometimes we added shredded cheddar cheese. That was it. My taco tastes have since evolved.

The origins of the word taco are murky. The term appears to have been first used in Mexican silver mines in the 18th century, and it referred to the small charges used to extract ore. “Tacos” were little pieces of paper wrapped around gunpowder and inserted into holes drilled into the rock face. The shape of those charges must have been remarkably similar to what we now call a rolled-taco, or taquito. The word didn’t become associated with a food product until the 19th century. Although tacos got off to a slow start, this simple Mexican dish was adopted by the European-American citizens of California with remarkable vigor and enthusiasm.

Despite California’s Spanish and Mexican origins, surprisingly few Spanish language cookbooks have been published in California. The first example was Encarnación Pinedo’s *El Cocinero Español* (San Francisco: E.C. Hughes, 1898). Dan Strehl, the pioneering bibliographer of California food and wine books, identified *El Cocinero Español* as the first cookbook printed in Spanish in California, the first with a significant number of recipes from Mexico and Latin America, and the first cookbook that comprehensively demonstrated the

Mexican food preparation techniques that were being employed in California. This rare volume contains a whopping one-thousand recipes, but Señora Pinedo's book doesn't have even a single recipe for a taco.

A few of the writers of California's earliest English language cookbooks included sections dedicated to Mexican dishes, but their Mexican recipes were almost always referred to as "Spanish" dishes, and were often lumped into a section that included all foreign foods. The irony of a California cookery imprint labeling a Mexican recipe as "foreign" is, of course, immense. Yet within that irony, one detects early affection for the cuisine.

The first cookbook that was published in Los Angeles, aptly named *Los Angeles Cookery* (Los Angeles: Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1881) was compiled by the ladies of the Fort Street Methodist Episcopal Church from donated recipes in order to raise funds to pay off the church's mortgage. Among the recipes are several attributed to "Mrs. Downey", including one for a spicy "Zalza" that wouldn't be out of place in a trendy upscale taqueria today. Mrs. Downey had been born Maria de Jesus Jacinta Guirado, the daughter of a prominent Mexican family, and had risen to become the First Lady of California when her husband John G. Downey succeeded to the governorship in 1860. Her husband founded the town of Downey, which is perhaps best known as being the birthplace of the pop music superstars Richard and Karen Carpenter. The Carpenters of Downey were known taco-lovers, but apparently the ladies of the Fort Street Methodist Episcopal Church were not, as their cookbook doesn't have a single recipe for tacos in its "Spanish" section.

And tacos didn't even appear in the first English language cookbook that was entirely dedicated to Mexican cuisine, May Southworth's *One-hundred and one Mexican Dishes* (San Francisco: Paul Elder, 1906). Southworth's gorgeous cookbook, which was designed by John Henry Nash and printed by the Tomoyé Press, did in fact include 101 recipes, but not a single one for tacos.

It wasn't until 1914 that a recipe for a taco first showed up in an American cookbook. Improbably, the publisher of the first taco recipe was a Midwestern housewife turned domestic lecturer named Bertha Haffner-Ginger. After winning a gold medal for baking at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, Bertha toured the country giving lectures, and she arrived in Los Angeles in 1911. The *Los Angeles Times* quickly hired her to head up their newly formed School of Domestic Science, and during a lunchtime stroll near the *Times*' downtown offices she stumbled into the barrio of Sonoratown and the tortilla factory of Elias & Guzman. Bertha was mesmerized as she watched the women inside the factory making fresh tortillas, enchiladas and tamales, and that experience initiated her love affair with Mexican cuisine. In 1914 she published *California Mexican-Spanish Cook Book* (Los Angeles: Citizen Print Shop). Bertha's taco recipe

is simple, involving just a bit of meat inside a folded tortilla that is fried in oil and topped with chile sauce, but her proto-taco was the first “Taco Californica”.

The many manifestations of our 21st century tacos reflect the adventurousness of a food-obsessed world that has been shrunk by the ease of travel, the availability of diverse ingredients, and an openness to new culinary ideas. I have enjoyed thousands of tacos which were variously filled with beef, chicken, pork, shrimp, duck, crab, or fish that was raw, cooked or fermented; garnished with salsas, vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, cheeses, and crema; nearly always seasoned with chiles, but often with other delicious spices and herbs; and served in tortillas that were crispy and soft, and made of corn, wheat, rice, wontons, and even thinly sliced jicama.

In short, Taco Californica has evolved into hundreds of subspecies of taco, and while I know that neither Encarnación Pinedo nor Bertha Haffner-Ginger would recognize many of our modern tacos as Mexican dishes, each of those tacos owe their delicious heritage to the genius idea that our Mexican sisters and brothers had to simply wrap a tortilla around a delicious filling.

As a tribute to Taco Californica, and to its Mexican heritage, here is Bertha’s recipe:



TACO

Made by putting chopped cooked
beef and chile sauce in
Tortilla made of meal and flour;
folded, edges sealed together
with egg; fried in deep fat,
chile sauce served over it.



RANDALL TARPEY-SCHWED is President of The Book Club of California and the co-author of *M.F.K. Fisher: An Annotated Bibliography* (CreateSpace, 2013).

M.F.K. Fisher: An Appreciation

Cynthia Graubart

SHE WAS QUIRKY, INDEPENDENT, OPINIONATED, SELF-ABSORBED, and she possessed a gift for exploring human appetites. Authoring thirty books, and writing nearly one hundred articles, columns, and stories for publication across five decades, Mary Francis Kennedy Fisher (M.F.K. Fisher) was a prolific producer of food for thought, crossing the genres of novels, travel, cooking, memoir, and essay, and she even had a stint as a writer for Paramount in Hollywood. Her writing is as relevant today as ever, says Celia Sack of Omnivore Books in San Francisco, California, “and her books are vital to building a collection of important food writing.”

Don Lindgren, of Rabelais Books in Biddeford, Maine says, “She positioned herself within the subject, and made the writing as much about her as about the food. This set the tone for so much of American food writing that’s come since, and she’s had a huge impact on food writers today, even many who have not read her work owe her a debt.”

Fisher wrote about the pleasures of the table, mixing hunger, sex, love, family, and a sense of place, addressing the broad sense of hunger while peppering the pages with tidbits of her own life and loves. Shy in outward appearance, and self-deprecating on occasion, she claimed “The only thing I know how to do besides cook and love a few people is to write.”

Juggling the demands of caregiver, wife, and later a single mother, she supported herself and her daughters on her income from writing. She was a spectacular correspondent, writing an estimable 15,000 letters in her lifetime, exchanging the details of her personal and professional life with close friends and family. She wrote candidly about her life, her struggles, and her writing. She, like most authors, had mixed feelings about her agents, publisher, and finished works. She claimed to not care about money, but clearly needed an income to raise her family and fund her travel abroad.

Biographers and friends have enriched our understanding of this complex woman in books including *Poets of the Appetites* by Joan Reardon (New York: North Point Press, 2004) and *Between Friends: M.F.K. Fisher and Me* by Jeannette Ferrary (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991), and have shared her personal record in *M.F.K. Fisher: A Life in Letters, Correspondence 1929–1991*; Selected and compiled by Norah K. Barr, Marsha Moran, Patrick Moran (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998). The bibliography compiled by Donald Zealand and Randall Tarpey-Schwed (*M.F.K. Fisher: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2013, revised edition) is the definitive bibliography of Fisher’s

works and includes listings of not only Fisher's books, but her short stories, articles, essays, introductions to others' books, and books Fisher reviewed in print. True aficionados will relish the secondary source listings including references to and about Fisher along with articles and obituaries about her and notations of theses and dissertations covering Fisher's works. These books served me well as source material for this article.

Published to mostly favorable reviews, Fisher's first book, *Serve it Forth* (New York, London: Harper, 1937), was called a delightful book by *The New York Times*: "It is erudite and witty and experienced and young. The truth is that it is stamped on every page with individuality." *Harper's Monthly* published excerpts before the publication date, and the public eagerly awaited the book's June 1937 publication. As for Fisher, she claimed in a letter that "I know very little of the book, but after reams of good reviews, and the enthusiastic letters from relatives who have been trying to get it for two weeks at Macy's or who had been told that Robinson's sold out three times, I was surprised and disappointed to get a letter from *Harper's*...quoting sales 22 copies one week, 34 another, and so on. Someone must have read the damned book — or is that what is called *succes d'estime*?" She dedicated the book to her parents, Rex and Edith, but little notice was paid to her by them for her first book. As with most collections, obtaining an author's first book is key and as Lindgren says, "An author's first book is always an interesting window into their outlook. Market pressures and preconceived notions of editors and publishers are brought less to bear on the first book. And first books are recognized as interesting by most collectors, so the book will likely remain desirable when other fashions may change. I would almost always include the first book on any such list."

Fisher's second published book, a novel typical of the time titled *Touch and Go* by Victoria Berne (pseudonym of M.F.K. Fisher and Dillwyn Parrish), (New York and London: Harper, 1939), was a collaboration between Fisher and her soon-to-be second husband, Dillwyn Parrish. A breezy light romance with better descriptions of the scenery than anything else, it was better received by the public than the critics. Fisher wrote in a letter to close friend Larry Powell "our book comes out in May — awful trash, but entertaining for hammock-trade — we hope it will make piles of dough." She later wrote again to Powell, after reading lackluster reviews, referring to the novel as "futile but entertaining... Don't waste 2 dollars on it. If I ever get a free copy I'll send it to you. I think ours went to Switzerland [from where she had recently moved]." Often difficult to find, Lindgren notes that "it's largely overlooked even by people who care about Fisher and her writing."

Fisher's next book, *Consider the Oyster* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), a slim volume, with just twenty-eight recipes, contains often witty and

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insightful descriptions of the loved and loathed bivalve. Although *Gourmet* rejected printing three chapters from it in the magazine prior to the book's publication, *Consider the Oyster* was met with praise and attention. Reardon writes in *Poet of the Appetites*, "She blends oyster lore and personal experience with abandon, and shares her stories, her memories of stories told to her, and her recipes the same way she would share a tureen of oyster bisque, generously ladling out a 'lusty bit of nourishment.' These stories are as much about comfort, warmth, and love as they are about food."

In the days and weeks following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, residents of the West Coast felt an attack would be imminent on the southern California coast. Fisher set about to write about preparing for and surviving wartime. Some articles appeared in the *Whittier News*, where they later became the start of *How to Cook a Wolf* (New York: Duel, Sloan and Pearce, 1942). Years later, the critic Walter Kendrick wrote in *The New York Times Book Review* in 1996, "Fisher thought well enough of both food and writing to perfect a hybrid genre, starting with *Consider the Oyster* and *How to Cook a Wolf*, that gently folded recipes in to stories... Her highest praise for any dish, from bread and cheese to truffles, was to declare it good."

The Gastronomical Me (New York: Duel, Sloan and Pearce, 1943) followed *How to Cook A Wolf* just a year later, written while Fisher was in seclusion to hide an unwed pregnancy. Telling even her family she was writing for a government war office, she worked feverishly on the autobiographical book. Sheila Hibben wrote in the *Weekly Book Review*, "One may disagree with an occasional passage in *The Gastronomical Me*, but I can imagine no two opinions about Mrs. Fisher's style. The brilliance, the bite, the flexibleness that distinguished *Serve it Forth* are apparent in this latest work, which also marks an increase in the author's technical virtuosity." It's hard to believe seventy-five years have passed since its publication as Fisher so embodies our image of a modern food writer. For this particular title, collectors are interested in the true first edition where the author's photo on the original dust jacket, taken by the glamour photographer George Hurrell, depicted Fisher in a reclining, seductive pose. Deemed too racy, the book was recalled and a new jacket issued, this time with a more traditional author photo.

Her collection of historical meals found in literature, *Here Let us Feast: A Book of Banquets* (New York: Viking, 1946) met with great acclaim for Fisher as a writer and researcher. Written while under pressure to run a household suitable for visiting family and friends and a 'menagerie of dogs and cats,' Fisher found it difficult to finish the manuscript and once published, she wrote to Powell, "I have no feeling about it, except a profound relief that it's done with. It was, for many unavoidable reasons, a tiring and even unpleasant task."

While making suggested edits from the publisher on her first solo novel, *Not Now But Now* (New York: Viking, 1947), she wrote in her journal “[It] pleases me in a rather grudging un-reassuring way. I can’t believe any book I could ever write is as good as they say this is, and I keep thinking of the far day when I may perhaps write something I myself will feel satisfied about and nobody will like it but me.” The novel was met with modest reviews and years later Fisher dismissed the novel as “a potboiler.”

Considered by many to be the best in French language translation as it relates to food, *The Physiology of Taste, Or Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy* by Jean Anthelm Brillat-Savarin: A new translation by M.F.K. Fisher with Preface and Annotations by the Translator and Illustrations by Sylvain Sauvage. (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1949) has no equal. Fisher’s deep love and command of the French language allowed for an unparalleled translation of this 1825 European classic of gastronomy.

After a twelve-year hiatus from book writing, and suffering from a number of illnesses, Fisher wrote *A Cordiall Water: A Garland of Odd & Old Receipts to Assuage the Ills of Man & Beast* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961). She had a long interest in illness, healing, and wellness throughout the years, looking for treatment for her husband Dillwyn’s pain, and the various ailments suffered by members of her family, including the family cat. The collection of recipes and prescriptions, gathered from across centuries, begs the question whether the cure is worse than the disease. *Kirkus Reviews* wrote that the collection “relates the foolishness to the faith and the common concerns of illness and health.”

Fisher continued writing for two more decades, and collections of her works have been published over the years, even posthumously. Mining her life in France and California was the mainstay of many of these.

For fine and small press books, Lindgren recommends any of the Fisher’s publications issued by the Yolla Bolly Press, including *The Boss Dog*, her account of motherhood (written in the 1960s, but published in 1990) or *Two Kitchens in Provence* (1999). Fisher’s work was issued by a number of small or fine presses over the years, and some of her late works were issued by this fine hand press operation from Covelo, California. He notes that the Arion Press edition of *Physiology of Taste* (1994), with illustrations by Wayne Thiebaud, is simply magnificent.

These are but a few of Fisher’s titles. No matter the genre — fiction, memoir, cookbook — M.F.K. Fisher is irresistible. Collecting her books, as I have for many years, connected me to the world of food writing as a profession and her style and language have been an inspiration. I find this passage from *The Gastronomical Me*, appearing in her obituary printed in *The New York Times* to be the central theme of all of Fisher’s writing: “People ask me: Why do you

write about food, and eating and drinking? Why don't you write about the struggle for power and security, and about love, the way others do. They ask it accusingly, as if I were somehow gross, unfaithful to the honor of my craft. The easiest answer is to say that, like most humans, I am hungry. But there is more than that. It seems to me that our three basic needs, for food and security and love are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really writing about love and the hunger for it, and warmth and the love of it and the hunger for it."

Luckily for the reader and the collector, there are many more noted food writers worthy of collecting and Sack recommends Elizabeth David, A.J. Leibling, Waverly Root, Jane Grigson, Edna Lewis, Patience Gray, Angelo Pellegrini, and the more recent Ruth Reichl, Laurie Colwin, and Michael Pollan. As Lindgren advises us, "collecting any food writer that one favors will yield pleasures. Learn about their life, their works, the people around them. Sometimes your small discoveries will surprise you, and sometimes they will add up to an interesting or important piece of our larger understanding of food in our culture." I concur.

CYNTHIA GRAUBART is a food writer and James Beard Award-winning cookbook author whose eighth cookbook, *Sunday Suppers*, was published by Oxmoor House in 2017.



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To Inverness, with Love

Ellen Langer

MANY YEARS AGO, LONG BEFORE I CAME TO STUDY and eventually teach the Czech language, I had the pleasure of eating in the old Manka's restaurant in Inverness, California. The meal was hearty, rich, and satisfying; the restaurant and cottages evoked a hunting lodge an era, a continent, and a war or two away. The restaurant changed hands long ago, the original owner is gone, the main lodge burned to the ground in 2006, but more than a memory remains: a 1979 cookbook cum reminiscence entitled *Manka's Czech Cookbook and Memoirs: My Own Story and How my mother cooked in Prague and How we cook now in Inverness, California*, by Milan Prokupek, Sr.

Czech cookbooks are not rare in English. Homesick Czechs and their descendants in areas once heavily settled by Czechs have written a number of such books (*Favorite Recipes of the Nebraska Czechs* and similar English language titles, and Czech-language ones like *Národní domácí kuchařka* (*National Home Cooking*)) ranging from nostalgic authentic Czech recipes to those which mix adapted versions of Czech standards with the basic pineapple upside down cake of midcentury America. The degree to which they adapt to American reality varies.

Among these, *Manka's Czech Cookbook and Memoirs* stands unrepentantly in the tradition of Czech cookbooks. Unlike the typical American cookbook, the true Czech cookbook assumes that the reader knows the culinary equivalent of "enough to come in out of the rain:" the correct temperature at which to bake breads, cakes, cookies; how to roast meats; how long to let dough rise; and all such standards. Prokupek does not coddle the would-be chef but warns, "The recipes will not have the measurements of ingredients (i.e., *1 cup* flour, *1 tablespoon* butter, *1 teaspoon* salt, etc.). I always believe that a gourmet is 'born,' just as is a dancer, painter, or musician, and not educated!" This particular book, however, being both a personal and culinary memoir as well as a cookbook, does introduce the reader to concepts, sometimes disguised as nostalgic anecdotes, about the differences between Czech and American cooking styles and terminology.

The style of the cookbook is deeply rooted in Czech tradition. Like most of the Czech cookbooks I have read, it ignores the American penchant for list-making and step-by-step instructions and instead employs a dense paragraph format of ingredients and basic guidelines. This style appears in cookbooks from the Czech lands when they were under Austro-Hungarian rule and those from Czechoslovakia as well as the Czech language cookbooks published in

Franka's

CZECH COOKBOOK ^{and} MEMOIRS

MY OWN
STORY
AND
HOW MY
MOTHER
COOKED IN
PRAGUE
AND
HOW WE
COOK NOW
IN
INVERNESS
CALIFORNIA
BY
MILAN
PROKUPEK^{SR}



places like Chicago for still-Czech-speaking immigrants, whose communities often dated from before Czechoslovakia gained its independence with the end of World War I. For those immigrants, food and culture, the preservation of culinary heritage as part of the cultural tradition, was clearly seen as important by not only immigrant cooks but by publishers serving their communities. It is worth remembering that in the era before independence, one could see oneself as just as Czech in Nebraska or Illinois as in Bohemia or Moravia if one lived in a Czech-speaking enclave, given that the language of business, higher education, and government in the old country was German.

This recognition of the importance of food in culture itself continues an important Czech tradition. One of the significant early works in the Czech national revival in the 19th century was Magdalena Dobromila Rettigová's 1826 *Domáci kuchařka aneb Pojednání o masitých a postních pokrmech pro dcerky české a moravské* (*Domestic Cookery or An Essay on Meats and Lenten Fare for Czech and Moravian Daughters*). Part of the National Revival movement included reviving the use of the Czech language as a language of culture and science, a considerable task and one which the noted Czech philologist Josef Dobrovský (1753–1829) despaired of. Rettigová was a member of one of the early literary circles in an era which produced few works of high literary caliber. She wrote poetry, plays, and short stories, but it was her cookbook which became a best-seller and won her lasting fame.

The subtitle of the Manka's cookbook tells a story in itself which speaks to these traditions and to Czech exile existence: *My Own Story and How my mother cooked in Prague and How we cook now in Inverness, California*. It rambles through the Czech culinary landscape, dropping bits of personal history, Czech history and general culture, dotted throughout with classic illustrations by nineteenth century artist Mikoláš Aleš. Unlike a typical cookbook, however, it does not end with dessert. Rather, it concludes with a paean to the natural beauty of the Point Reyes Natural Seashore within which the town of Inverness is located. The cookbook stands as a gift from a successful immigrant to the community in which he and his family made a home and celebration of that community and its beauties.

ELLEN LANGER is a professor of Czech at the University of California, Berkeley, and former printer.

Twain's Feast Revisited

Henry Voigt

WHILE TOURING EUROPE IN 1878 AND 1879, Mark Twain filled many notebooks for use in a travelogue. Although much of what he wrote during the sixteen-month trip was never published, such as his comparisons of European and American homes and transportation, a list of his favorite foods made it into the final manuscript of *A Tramp Abroad* (1880). Having grown weary of the “monotonous variety of unstriking dishes” in European hotels, Twain declared: “It has now been many months, at the present writing, since I have had a nourishing meal, but I shall soon have one — a modest, private affair, all to myself. I have selected a few dishes, and made out a little bill of fare, which will go home in the steamer that precedes me, and be hot when I arrive...”¹ Miraculously, Twain's iconic list of eighty American foods somehow defined a national cuisine.

In his book *Twain's Feast: Searching for America's Lost Foods in the Footsteps of Samuel Clemens* (Penguin Press, 2010), slow food advocate Andrew Beahrs uses Twain's imaginary menu as a jumping off point to track down eight of the foods, and thereby draw our attention to some of the wild species that have all but vanished from American tables. For Beahrs, the menu represents an ideal: “Fresh. Local. Intimately tied to place.” And while it's true that Twain experienced many of his favorite foods in their places of origin, it would be a mistake to cast him as a “proto-locavore,” espousing a philosophy of locally grown foods. Rather, Twain was a man of his generation — one of the first generations whose diet was not subject to strict geographical constraints. He clearly embraced this new freedom. Celebrating America's expansive natural bounty, Twain developed his list of foods to challenge the prevailing idea that everything was better in Europe. (It was the same theme that characterized his unpublished critique of European homes and transport — “With them it is all gilding and massiveness and state...”²) Twain was proud of American cuisine, seeing it as a reflection of the nation's straightforward character. One way to think about Twain's bill of fare, and what it revealed about his country's unpretentious, technology-driven culture, is to compare it to an actual menu of the period.

1. Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, New York (1880).

2. <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu//Exhibits/MTP/Images/mt18.jpg>

Mark Twain's Bill of Fare

Radishes. Baked apples with cream.	Baltimore perch.
Fried oysters; stewed oysters. Frogs.	Brook trout, from Sierra Nevada.
American coffee, with real cream.	Lake trout, from Tahoe.
American butter.	Sheep-head and croakers,
Porter-house steak.	from New Orleans.
Fried chicken, Southern style.	Black bass from the Mississippi.
Saratoga potatoes.	American roast beef.
Broiled chicken, American style.	Roast turkey, Thanksgiving style.
Hot wheat-bread, Southern style.	Cranberry sauce. Celery.
Hot biscuits, Southern style.	Roast wild turkey. Woodcock.
Hot buckwheat cakes.	Canvas-back-duck, from Baltimore.
American toast.	Prairie hens, from Illinois.
Clear maple syrup.	Missouri partridges, broiled.
Virginia bacon, broiled.	'Possum. Coon.
Blue points, on the half shell.	Boston bacon and beans.
Cherry-stone clams.	Green corn, on the ear.
San Francisco mussels, steamed.	Hot corn-pone, with chitlings,
Oyster soup.	Southern style.
Clam soup.	Hot hoe-cakes, Southern style.
Philadelphia Ter[r]rapin soup.	Hot egg-bread, Southern style.
Bacon and greens, Southern style.	Hot light-bread, Southern style.
Hominy. Boiled onions. Turnips.	Buttermilk. Iced sweet milk.
Pumpkin. Squash. Asparagus.	Apple dumplings, with real cream.
Butter beans. Sweet potatoes.	Apple pie. Apple fritters.
Lettuce. Succotash. String beans.	Apple puffs, Southern style.
Mashed potatoes. Catsup.	Peach cobbler, Southern style.
Boiled potatoes, in their skins.	Peach pie. American mince pie.
New Potatoes, minus the skins.	Pumpkin pie. Squash pie.
Early rose potatoes, roasted in the ashes,	All sorts of American pastry.
Southern style, served hot.	Fresh American fruits of all sorts,
Sliced tomatoes, with sugar or	including strawberries which are not to be
vinegar. Stewed tomatoes.	doled out as if they were jewelry,
Green corn, cut from the ear and served	but in a more liberal way.
with butter and pepper.	Ice-water — not prepared in an effectual
Oysters roasted in shell — Northern style.	goblet, but in the sincere
Soft-shell crabs. Connecticut shad.	and capable refrigerator.

The menu below comes from the Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas. This resort was located about 700 miles southwest of Chicago, not far from the part of neighboring Missouri where Twain grew up. For its Christmas dinner in 1875, the new 120-room hotel pulled out all the stops, serving a large number of special dishes.³ In fact, its remote location may have prompted the steward to note the points of origin for many of the foods that he was able to procure, giving this bill of fare a striking resemblance to Twain's ideal meal.

3. Already the largest hotel in the state, the Arlington added 100 rooms in 1880. The building was torn down in 1893 to make way for a 300-room Spanish Renaissance hotel which burned down in 1923. It was replaced with the 560-room hotel still in operation.

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The cities and states of origin on the Arlington menu are highlighted in small caps below. Considering that this menu was created for a real dinner, it is surprising how similar it is to Twain's imaginary list. After all, Twain had utter literary license, free to include breakfast and dinner dishes, and was not constrained by what could be obtained on a given day or season.



Arlington Hotel Menu

- | | |
|--|--|
| BALTIMORE raw oysters. | with cranberry sauce. |
| Green sea turtle soup. Oyster soup. | Wild turkeys, roasted. |
| Fried oysters. Escalloped oysters. | Haunch of KANSAS buffalo, |
| CALIFORNIA salmon, boiled, | with Madeira sauce. |
| with sauce cardinal. | MISSISSIPPI o'possum, baked, |
| MACKINAW trout, baked, wine sauce. | with sweet potatoes, OLD VIRGINIA style. |
| Round of ST. LOUIS spiced beef. | TENNESSEE coon, mustard sauce. |
| Byrne & Geary's "X"mas beef. | Young prairie grouse, roasted, |
| "Magnolia" sugar cured hams, | with cranberry jelly. |
| with Champagne sauce. | ILLINOIS pheasants, broiled, |
| Turkey, stuffed with chestnuts. | with steward's sauce. |
| Saddle of KENTUCKY south down | Wild goose, with quince jelly. |
| mutton, with red currant jelly. | TEXAS jack rabbits, stewed, with bacon. |
| Legs and saddles of ARKANSAS venison, | OUACHITA RIVER beavers, roasted, |
| with red current jelly. | with wine sauce. |
| Squirrels, broiled, à la maitre d'hotel. | Shaker corn. Stewed tomatoes. |
| Blue wing and mallard ducks, | String beans. Lima beans. ⁴ |
| with plum jelly. | Baked sweet potatoes. Fried parsnips. |
| Leg of OUACHITA black bear, | NEW ENGLAND pumpkin pie. |
| roasted, with devil's sauce. | Mince pie. Fresh peach pie. |
| Canvas back and red head ducks, | Fresh peaches with cream. |
| with green gage jelly. | Green gages. Egg plums. Damsons. |
| Saddle of NEBRASKA antelope, | Oranges in native wine. |

4. Lima beans, a food of Andean and Mesoamerican origin, were one of foods that Twain dropped from the original list in his notebook.

The presence of beaver and black bear from the Ouachita River watershed, and venison from Arkansas, reflected local pride. On the other hand, there was also an appreciation of being able to transport food over long distances by rail.^{5, 6} This is immediately evident by the large, artistic type that boasts “Baltimore (Raw) Oysters.” This special menu includes many game dishes, such as Kansas buffalo, Nebraska antelope, and Texas jack rabbits, and perishable fish like California salmon and Mackinaw trout.

Being able to procure a wide variety of foods in Arkansas was a new thing. When railroads began operations in the 1840s, they profoundly affected people’s sense of time and space. Initially, the change in personal mobility was startling, but as the rail network expanded after the Civil War, it was the vast increase in freight traffic which changed perceptions.⁷ By the 1870s, refrigerated cars began to impact food distribution, dramatically increasing the number of items that could be shown on a menu in an isolated rural location. It must have been exhilarating when fresh oysters suddenly appeared on menus throughout the country during this period. Processed foods were also being more broadly distributed — Tobasco (*sic*) Red Pepper Sauce makes an early appearance on this menu.

Rapid technological development turned out to be a two-edged sword, as the railroads hastened the decline of the game they were speeding to market. The free-roaming buffalo were over-hunted to the point that they completely vanished from the Great Plains by 1882. The loss of habitat spelled doom for other wild animals. The magnificent prairies of Illinois, once home to Twain’s prairie hens and the Arlington’s pheasants, disappeared under a monocultural sea of corn.⁸ In fact, both menus include archetypal foods that Americans generally no longer eat. Twain may have included coon and possum, which he presumably ate in his youth, simply to amuse his readers. In the Trans-Mississippi region, these critters were nostalgic foods that the first settlers

5. The Ouachita River runs 605 miles south and east through Arkansas and Louisiana, joining the Red River just before it enters the Mississippi River.

6. Menus for the annual game dinners held at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Chicago during this period did not indicate the origin of the game for several possible reasons. The large quantities of game needed for these dinners often required sourcing from multiple locations. It was also less of a logistical feat to procure a wide variety of game in Chicago during the late 1870s. (Ref: The Annual Game Dinner, 4 March 2010.)

7. After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the mileage of track in operation in the U.S. exploded from about 53,000 miles in 1870 to over 163,000 miles in 1890. By that time, goods were being shipped directly to rural households from newly-established mail order houses, such as Sears, Roebuck, and Co. in Chicago, which published its first mail order catalog in 1888. The railroads peaked in 1916 with 254,000 miles of track.

8. Andrew Beahrs, *Twain’s Feast: Searching for America’s Lost Foods in the Footsteps of Samuel Clemens*, New York (2010).

ate when they cleared the land. The hunt for these animals continued for years afterward, becoming something of a folk tradition. It is interesting that the Arlington menu specifies Tennessee raccoon and Mississippi possum, especially considering that both were plentiful in Arkansas. The hotel was not making a gustatory distinction; the place of origin had a deeper meaning. These foods represented life in the Old South. In 1875, the hunting of these animals was almost the exclusive domain of African Americans who, as slaves, pursued them at night to provide meat for their families during their years of bondage.⁹ There are also some big differences between these two menus. Twain used simple language like “Northern Style,” and more often “Southern Style,” to describe his most elaborate preparations. He also desired “all sorts of American pastries.” By contrast, the Arlington offers an international assortment — Genoise cake, Russian biscuits, Chinese pears, Mecca loaves, and English macaroons. Indeed, English food was then the primary basis of restaurant and hotel fare in the United States, as reflected by the Leicestershire pork pot pie and English plum pudding. There are no English dishes on Twain’s menu.

The absence of French on Twain’s bill of fare is also revealing. French was used extensively on the menus of luxury establishments in the nineteenth century. The Arlington Hotel served dishes with names like *pate de foie gros (sic) à la Strasbourg* and *gigot d’agneau à la Provencale*. Some of the English dishes are described in a mixture of English and French terms, such as *mayonaise of chicken à la Anglaise*. The English and French influences are neatly summarized at the bottom by the English breakfast tea and coffee *à la Francaise*. By contrast, Twain serves the quintessential American beverage — ice water from “the sincere and capable refrigerator,” a new technology that also reflected national attributes.

Twain concluded his bill of fare on a philosophical note. “Foreigners cannot enjoy our food, I suppose, any more than we can enjoy theirs. It is not strange; for tastes are made, not born. I might not glorify my bill of fare until I was tired; but after all, the Scotchman would shake his head and say, ‘Where’s my haggis?’ and the Fijian would sigh and say, ‘Where’s my missionary?’”

HENRY VOIGT collects menus that reflect the history and culture of the United States and serves on the board of the Ephemera Society of America.

9. Ibid.

Red Mayo

Tom Nealon

GROWING UP I WAS TAUGHT to put Russian dressing on my reuben and Thousand Island (which won out but recently over the plural thousand islands) on a salad. Or maybe it was the other way around? Much ink has been spilled trying to sort, separate, and suss out what the difference is between them, where they came from, and how Thousand Island emerged victorious, but not, we will see, unscathed, from their brutal internecine conflict. Are they almost the same or meaningfully different? Are the islands pickle bits? Why is it called Russian? Because it's pink(o)? Was it made from sour cream or horseradish? Does it, or did it, include caviar? Did it fall out of fashion during the cold war? Was it all the fault of McDonalds and their not-so-secret sauce? What, in short, is going on with these ubiquitous yet mysterious dressings?

The earliest mention of both Thousand Island and Russian date to the same period — around 1910 — and it has always been assumed by salad dressing historians that they developed concurrently. This makes sense since it was both a golden age of salad — hotels and restaurants were first exerting their food influence in this period and invented salads in a spiraling salad arms race that left us with the wedge and the waldorf, the cobb and the caesar — and a popular time for red foods both naturally and unnaturally (in 1878 the food coloring amaranth dye, later called red dye no. 2, was invented) colored. These dressings would have filled a need for a red hued dressing to put on all of the new salads being churned out by the salad industrial complex. It was also, in general, a time period where products that had been made at home or in small batches were starting to be produced in industrial quantities.

People have remarked over the years at the differences in the recipes for Russian and thousand Island, but most of them are cherry picking — the actual recipes are very similar and contained mayo, chilli sauce and/or ketchup and usually something else. People over the years have claimed that hard boiled eggs are in Thousand Island and not Russian or that TI has ketchup and Russian has chilli sauce, but it's common to see both those rules broken or even reversed. Thousand island does tend to have more junk in it — chives, relish — that you don't see in Russian, and it often had Worcestershire or anchovy sauce (though Russian recipes sometime include Worcestershire). Even the chilli sauce and ketchup weren't as far apart as they seem — chilli sauce of the time was mostly tomato with some added cayenne, more similar to tomato ketchup than sriracha or Cholula. Tomato ketchup itself had only but lately come out on top during the great ketchup wars of the 19th century, where it bested

walnut, mushroom, oyster, and a host of other half-remembered ketchups to be the one true ketchup that we know so well. It is always good to remember that many of these ingredients were more fluid, more in flux than we might suppose from the staid bottles we see in the supermarket. Both dressings sometimes had whipped cream (!), which I have to (need to) assume was more often sour cream in the wild, but because sour cream had only just arrived in the U.S., it was expressed as whipped cream in cookbooks, and once in a while you see horseradish in Russian. The most striking difference — and the origin of Russian's name — is that early on, it often had caviar in it (though it would have made sense for the caviar to be the islands in Thousand Island, amidst all of this ingredient turmoil, this weirdly never seems to have been the case).

As to the origins of the dressings themselves, they are a jumble. A guy named Colburn in Nashua, NH supposedly invented Russian around 1910–13 and produced it for sale (Thomas Rector reportedly built an emulsifying machine out of a milk homogenizer around the same time and produced Russian, tartar sauce and mayo) and, Thousand Island, the story goes, was invented in the Thousand Islands region of New York State. The inventor of the latter is alternately described as a chef on a luxury yacht caught short of ingredients and forced to improvise (a much repeated story about the origins of mayonnaise itself is a version of this trope) — sometimes the yacht was George Boldt's and the chef was Oscar from the Waldorf-Astoria hotel — or an actress on a yacht who was friends with George Boldt and brought it to the Waldorf, or, even more improbably, it originated at the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago. Recently a recipe apparently postmarked 1907 with a similar list of ingredients (but not called Thousand Island) surfaced in the region and has been hailed as the actual origin recipe. Whatever really happened to muddle these two together happened very quickly because a 1912 community cookbook from Illinois is already giving recipes for “Russian or Thousand Island Salad Dressing” and Mrs. Rorer's popular 1917 cookbook *Keys to Simple Cookery* suggests making Russian dressing by adding caviar to Thousand Island. According to data at the NY Public Library menu project (which is incomplete but fascinating), Russian first appeared on a menu in 1914 and peaked in 1950. Thousand island first appeared in 1918, passed Russian in popularity in the early 1950s and peaked in 1981. But where did they come from? And how did they get so mixed up?

We all like a story and stories with a clear beginning are easier to tell and simpler to remember. Food stories tend to be messy, poorly documented things — at best they take place off the radar and away from written histories and, often, even written cookbooks. It's why people can lay claim to culinary inventions like Russian dressing or Thousand Island and have the stories

repeated for decades — it's hard to disprove them and the arc of a made up story is usually more appealing than the ambiguity of a real one, especially when it is engaged with capitalist fantasies of brilliant men inventing things and selling them. So while, by the same token, it is difficult to demonstrate that these origin stories are complete fabrications, here is why I believe that to be the case:

In the mid 19th century, when the vogue for red foods that would lead to the discovery of food coloring (mauveine in 1856, amaranth in 1878) was just getting going, the popular cookbook author Elizabeth Acton published a recipe for “Red or Green Mayonnaise Sauce” in the 1860 edition of her much reprinted *Modern Cookery, In all its Branches*. The green, colored with spinach, never really caught on, but the red, colored with lobster roe (often called lobster coral) was a minor hit. It pops up over and over again in recipes for the next 50 years. This red mayonnaise meandered through the decades until the turn of the century when people began coloring their mayo with tomato, a cheaper and far more ubiquitous colorant — a recipe for tomato mayonnaise in an issue of *The Delineator* from July, 1902 described the concoction as “comparatively new”. The inflection point for this red mayo is found in the 1910 *Settlement Cookbook* (and reappears as this seminal cookbook was reprinted) where red mayonnaise is first given as tomato but suggests lobster roe as a substitute.

C O D E X



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The 1916 *Anglo-Chinese Cookbook* goes a step further suggesting tomato, lobster coral or carmine (the red dye made with the cochineal insect that was used for food coloring for centuries and was the original colorant in pink lemonade) for coloring. By 1920 the *Children's Mission Cook Book* gives a recipe for Russian dressing as “Add Russian caviar to Thousand Island Dressing” and by 1922 in *The Castelar Crèche Cookbook* Los Angelinos had enlisted either Thousand Island or Russian with capers, chili sauce, and “1 small box of caviar” for their Avocado Cocktail, a dish that seems to have been but lately invented by the California Avocado Association which was founded in 1915. *The Hotel St. Francis Cookbook* (1919) includes recipes for both, but they are nearly identical (mayo, french dressing, olives, pimentos, chili sauce — the only difference was that Russian also had Worcestershire sauce). Both dressings were changed a bit during their journey west — notably the addition of olives — but were similarly co-mingled. Which makes sense! The reason Russian and Thousand Island are always and have always been mixed up and mistaken for one another is that they were both emerging from the same parent — red mayo — and basically competing for the same gustatory shelf space. It's actually more surprising that the two names survived at all than that they became confused since the main need they were invented to meet was simply something red for people to eat.

So, I guess what I'm saying is the kernels of what we now call Russian and Thousand Island were out there in the world for at least 50 years before someone “invented” them. Does that seem lame? It does, a little, but it's only because we've been trained to think that way — some guy invented this, filled this need, got rich, endowed a museum, or blew it all on whiskey and dice. Some guy. The world is big and various and our foods a wild, sprawling mess — shouldn't we embrace that instead of reductive folk tales. Isn't it wild that it all started with lobster roe? Who would have thought? Lobster roe; that is pretty cool. Or it started with something earlier and red that I didn't turn up — something that led to lobster roe, which branched into caviar (Russian branch) and tomato (Thousand Island branch). Mayonnaise, after all, basically hung around Spain and Provence for a thousand years as aioli/allioli before it caught on in 18th century France, hardly surprising that one of its offspring would do the same. So make some Thousand Island with olives, some Russian with caviar, try them both on a reuben or an avocado salad and you can be the judge of which is better and which is which. We've kept these two around for this long, might as well get some use out of them.

TOM NEALON is the author of *Food Fights and Culture Wars* (The Overlook Press, 2017) and a bookseller in Boston, MA, where he runs Pazzo Books and can often be found shouting about condiments.

Book Recommendations

Books as History: The Importance of Books Beyond Their Texts by David Pearson

Janice Braun

BOOKS THAT SURVEY THE HISTORY of the book are plentiful. Often organized chronologically, chapters march through time routinely citing various and sundry names (the usual suspects) and dates within a contextually narrow framework. David Pearson's book takes a different approach to the variety of subjects that pertain to the book as a physical entity. One can read this work cover-to-cover or dip into it as needed for reference, teaching, learning, or pleasure. One of its strengths is its numerous carefully chosen, relevant, and well presented color illustrations.

Pearson, Director of Libraries, Archives, and Guildhall Art Gallery at the City of London, states that there are two main themes to the book:

Primarily, it is about the various ways in which books can be interesting as artifacts, as objects with individual histories and design characteristics, beyond whatever value they have in the texts they convey.... The second theme is around the importance of seeing this, at a time when the world of books is in flux, and the need for them is questioned as their traditional functions are increasingly undertaken by electronic media.

Even so, this not a hand-wringing defense of the physical book or as Pearson puts it, "...a comfort blanket for bibliophiles" but an accessible and thought-provoking study of books in historical context with particular attention paid to differences that arise through owner's markings (e.g., bookplates, inscriptions, marginalia, underlining, etc.), bindings that predate publishers' or edition bindings as well as the printing process itself in a chapter entitled "Individuality Within Mass Production." There are also chapters on library history and a discussion on the immediate and near future and fate of the physical book, which exhorts: "Reader, write your thoughts in the margins of this copy — if it is yours to write in—and turn it into a unique object for posterity."

The book's final chapter is a case study entitled "Variety Between Copies" that compares five copies of Francis Bacon's *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh* published in 1622. As is done in previous chapters, Pearson uses a visual approach, first showing the differences in the bindings followed by marks of provenance and ending with an example of variant typesettings for the two editions both published the same year and often mixed between copies. These concepts, somewhat abstract and even obscure when one explains them to students, are easily understandable in this clearly described and illustrated presentation.

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Pearson also includes a well-curated list for further reading that is organized by topic (e.g., “The Future of Books and Libraries,” “Disposal and Destruction of Books,” etc.) that would be useful to the novice book history scholar or interested layperson.


JANICE BRAUN is Library Director, Special Collections Librarian and Director of the Center for the Book at Mills College.

Venice by John Craig

Leon Fine



THERE EXISTS A BOOKSTORE IN VENICE, which sells only books on the history, architecture, artworks, and maps of the city. This book by John Craig does not belong there. It does, however, belong where hundreds of authors have chosen to set their stories, namely in the charming, intriguing, captivating place that is Venice, with its shadows, shafts of light, reflections from water, and floating images. John Craig sees it with the eye of the engraver as “buildings of mellowed brick and stone with color, where rendered walls have been painted with natural earth pigments, but, for (for Craig), the overriding impression of the ordinary canal site building is a beautiful grey — grey warm — grey cold — grey rough and smooth, fading to searing white in the sun down to green and black toward weed and water”.



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In this remarkable and exquisite example of fine printing, Craig depicts the impressions of a flaneur, (who has walked through the city for over 20 years), through 80 wood engravings, linocuts (some in color) and narrative, enticing the reader/viewer into the interstices and overlooked spaces of the city. John Randle, printer, sees the resulting double-page spreads “almost as a series of stage sets, introducing us to the often undiscovered delights of a city which the author has visited regularly”. Randle has integrated the use of white space and the asymmetric imposition of type and images to maximal advantage.

Seemingly, intentionally-absent from the images are people and vehicles. To be sure, the gondolas are there but they stand empty and swaying. Light emanating from tunnels, a large tree, marine creatures, food stalls, and cobblestone walkways are all depicted with finesse.

Printed in Centaur and Arrighi type on special Zerkall mould-made paper in three different bindings, this much-awaited volume exceeded all expectations of collectors of finely printed books when it appeared.

LEON FINE is a biomedical scientist, physician, and writer with a collecting interest in fine printing and private press books.

Why I Read: The Serious Pleasure of Books by Wendy Lesser

Gail Jones

READING IS AN INTIMATE ACT. People who take their relationships to books seriously, those who love the solitary experience of reading, often keep the private details of those literary liaisons to themselves. They tend to feel that the only way to deeply understand a book is to let it gestate unhurriedly in one's brain, drawing on one's conscious and unconscious knowledge, meandering along familiar and unfamiliar pathways, until meaning emerges.

Literary criticism, with the best intentions in the world, can in the harsh light of analysis rob books of their mystery and snuff out the candles of our romantic *tete-a-tete* with literature. But *Why I Read: The Serious Pleasure of Books*, by Berkeley-based Wendy Lesser, avoids those lit-crit pitfalls. While we might expect great stuff from the editor of the nation's finest literary magazine (*The Threepenny Review*), we are still pleasantly surprised when Lesser immediately ushers us into her own private literary salon, conversationally addressing what she notices most about the books she loves, and why. With intellectual laser focus, she defines what literature is and why it is compelling and pleasurable (or not), all the while respecting that sacred, private compact we already have with books. Since Lesser has read nearly everything, her wide-ranging knowledge of how books work illuminates the nature of character and plot, literary authority, novelty, emotion, and tone (grandeur and intimacy), “elsewhere”

(other literary worlds), and a fascinating subject she calls “the space between.” And she shares it all with you like a close friend who freely expresses her most forthright and idiosyncratic opinions — which, she admits, may not be the same as yours at all. That this fact never bothers her is part of this book’s allure.

If you’ve ever wished for a supremely astute, scholarly, yet deeply personal explanation of why we love books, look no further than *Why I Read*. The feeling I get from reading this work is that, like Lesser, we should honor and love our own instincts about literature, which is a form of loving ourselves. In his marvelous poem on that subject, *Love After Love*, Caribbean poet Derek Walcott concludes with the line: “Sit. Feast on your life.” After digesting Lesser’s sumptuous views, you may find yourself feasting on books with new insight and delight.

GAIL JONES is a writer, editor, and book collector who currently serves as vice president of the board of directors of the Book Club of California.

The Young Manhood of Dave Chamlee by William Zane Chamlee

Robert McCamant

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED THIS BOOK at a small book fair held during the American Printing History Association conference held at the Huntington Library in 2016. I immediately purchased a copy, which was sent to Elizabeth Curren in Washington, DC for a review which appeared in *Parenthesis* 33. She returned my copy (I know because I photographed it), but it since disappeared. I kept hoping it would reappear. In the end, I bought a copy of the second edition (also long sold out) from John Howell.

Why would a term paper for the sophomore humanities class at Claremont Men’s College so excite me? It is an absolutely perfect treatment of a fascinating topic which obviously means a great deal to Rebecca Chamlee, who is the proprietor of Pie in the Sky Press (of Simi Valley). It is the family story of the printer’s grandfather’s grandfather, who moved from Tennessee to Texas and ultimately to California. The plot includes gunfights, horses, and a partly-accidental shooting.

The handset Centaur is small, and the text block is small on the 6 x 8-1/4-inch page. This is no overblown monument. It comes wrapped in limp leather, with long ties of additional leather. (The ties are long enough to completely circle the book several times.) There are small ornaments and rules (composed of ornaments) printed in olive and brown, which enrich the page. A few badly-reproduced family images complete the package.

If you ever have a chance to buy a copy of this extraordinary book, pay whatever the bookseller is asking. I predict it will rapidly become one of your most prized possessions.

ROBERT MCCAMANT is proprietor of Sherwin Beach Press and does volunteer activities for several organizations in the not-for-profit world of books.

Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore by Matthew Sullivan

The Daughter of Time by Josephine Tey

David Wingfield Pettus

GENRE FICTION — mysteries, science fiction, fantasy, romance, horror and true crime — has many avid readers. Fans of such works further divide themselves into followers of numerous sub-categories. Thus within the mystery genre there are “backstage” mysteries (set in and around the theater), police procedurals, “cozy’s” (usually set in the quiet English countryside,) hard-boiled mysteries, locked room mysteries, and others.

One area likely to particularly interest readers of the *Quarterly* is “biblio-mysteries” — stories set in a library, a bookstore or university, or those that have plots that involve books, literary themes, bookstores, book dealers, researchers, librarians, collectors, and others of our ilk.

Some of the more famous of these titles are *Possession* by A.S. Byatt, *Club Dumas* by Arturo Perez-Reverte, *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, and John Dunning’s Cliff Janeway series beginning with *Booked To Die*. The lengthy list also includes work by Agatha Christie, Lawrence Sanders (*Burglar in the Library*, etc.), and P.D. James.

Like many of you, I am addicted to these enjoyable examples of literary escapism, and confess to devouring the latest publications almost as soon as they appear. But I am also always on the lookout for classics of the genre and frequently find myself dedicating my reading hours to one of those.

Let me tell you about two such encounters that occurred recently:

A recently published title, *Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore* by Matthew Sullivan, (Simon & Schuster, 2017) is one of the best of its type I have read in some time. It is a fun, fast read about Lydia, a young clerk working in a Denver bookstore reminiscent of the famed “Tattered Cover” store in that town. The novel’s book emporium is beloved by a collection of “bookfrogs:” the lonely, the lost, the homeless who settle in the store’s aisles for much of the day. These endearing characters read, they discuss, they ponder, and they all love Lydia. And you will come to warm up to these folks, too — which is only part of the charm of this book.

The Book Club of California *Quarterly*

When Joey, one of the book frogs, hangs himself in the store, his death calls up Lydia's tumultuous past. A cleverly wrought series of literary clues leads Lydia on a search to find an explanation for Joey's suicide and to explore the roots of the darkness in her own past.

Told in Lydia's voice, I found the Matthew Sullivan's rendering of the voice of the female narrator as impeccable as was Arthur Golden's in *Memoirs of a Geisha*. So good is Sullivan, it is impossible not to think you are hearing Lydia tell the story. The plotting is excellent, and several subplots are wonderfully woven into the main tale, as is the sometimes-madcap culture of the bookstore. In an elegant development that keeps the pages turning, even the clues come out of books.

This is a book I highly recommend.

» » »

CONTINUING MY TOUR of bibliomysteries, I recently re-read a classic while recovering from shoulder surgery: Josephine Tey's remarkable *The Daughter of Time* (Pocketbooks, 1977).

As I reflected on my impressions of the book, I was particularly aware of the Percocet-induced confusion resulting from the medicine I was concurrently ingesting for pain. It seemed that the combination of the drug's effects and the hop-scotching of the plot made for a very anxiety-producing experience.

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You see, the nature of Percocet demands that one limit the frequency of its use to four-hour intervals. With sufficient pain, this leads one to eagerly watch the clock for the turn of the fourth hour, so that, soon, one's day is measured in the same one-sixth-of-a-day increments.

Such an over-arching schedule — when laid over a mystery plot that requires the reader to jump from twentieth century to fifteenth century and back again — all while tracking numerous Plantagenets and Tudors and Henrys and Richards — can be dizzying and make comprehension difficult if not impossible.

The very substance of the plot — wherein a twentieth century Scotland Yard inspector who is temporarily laid-up in hospital attempts to solve the age-old mystery of how and whether Richard III did, in fact, murder his two nephews in the Tower of London in 1483 — demands an agile reader. The plot also not incidentally suggests the source idea for the popular Lincoln Rhyme series of contemporary mystery novels.

Numerous other entertaining literary and historical references occur throughout the novel and — while giving nothing away — I will tell you that after reading *The Daughter of Time*, you will never again look the same way upon the sainted Thomas More, nor Shakespeare's hunchback King offering his "kingdom for a horse."

Tey's book offers an engaging story, eye-opening history, and a stimulating view of how documentary research is done via artifact and literature in the historical record. Fun stuff. Just lay off the pain-killers while reading it.

An author & playwright, DAVID PETTUS is a noted collector of nautical fiction which was the subject of his recent exhibition at the Book Club.

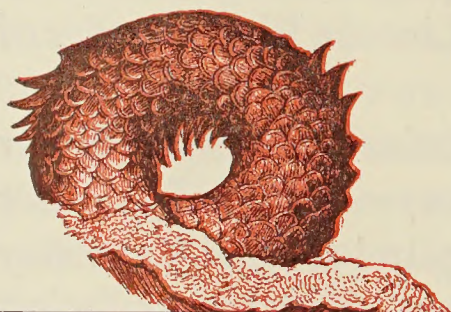
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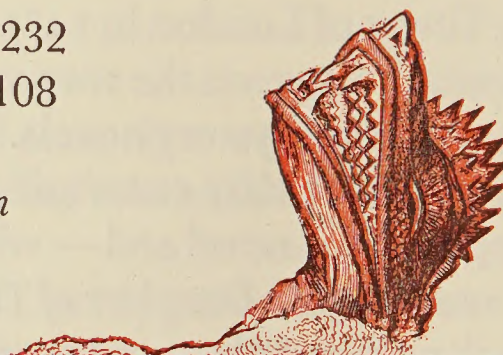
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